



Dist. 20 candidates, issues shaping up

Colleen Sparks

The Arizona Republic

Dec. 11, 2007 03:25 PM

The primary is nine months away, but competition for the one Senate and two House seats for state legislative District 20 is heating up. The district covers Ahwatukee, west Chandler and south Tempe.

Chandler resident and Democrat Ted Maish, 55, a retired Mesa High School industrial technology teacher, plans to challenge incumbent Sen. John Huppenthal, R-Chandler, for the Senate seat.

Rep. John McComish, R-Ahwatukee, is running for re-election for his House seat. Rep. Bob Robson, R-Chandler, is termed out.

Democratic candidates for the House seats are: Phill Westbrooks, 46, a Chandler resident and former Chandler City Councilman; and Corey Harris, a Tempe resident and Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran.

Republican candidates are Jeff Dial, a Chandler resident who ran unsuccessfully in 2004; Frank Schmuck, 42, a Tempe airline pilot who served in the U.S. Air Force during the Persian Gulf War; and Andy Swann, a Tempe resident and retired Arizona Department of Public Safety officer.

The district has about 37,530 registered Republicans, nearly 25,000 Democrats, about 600 Libertarians and about 25,300 other registered voters, according to the Secretary of State's [Web site](#).

Candidates said they expect the hot campaign issues to include education, how the Legislature contends with a state budget shortfall and illegal immigration. The primary election is Sept. 2 and the general election is Nov. 4.

"Education was my no. 1 issue when I ran previously," Dial said. "People move into the Ahwatukee, Tempe and Chandler area for the good schools."

Continued talks on the proposed south Mountain Freeway will also be a focus, candidates said.

"The fact that it's not taken care of says there's a lot of work to be done," Harris said.

Maish said he would like to "come up with a solution" to the proposed South Mountain Freeway issue that would not involve taking out any homes.

Schmuck said he "wants to hear more from the community" about the proposed freeway. He has a history of freeway issue involvement, and was nicknamed the "Father of Rubberized Asphalt" by Tempe Mayor Hugh Hallman because he studied rubberized asphalt use and presented his findings to the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) prior to the U.S. 60 freeway widening.

"My belief has always been that where freeways traverse residential neighborhoods we have a duty and an opportunity to provide the best opportunities for our citizens to live," Schmuck said.

Westbrooks said the freeway alignment, balancing the budget and education are his top issues. He said he already has "good working relationships with the Gila River Indian Community and ADOT."

"I am hoping to bring those relationships and my experience to help resolve the freeway alignment," he said.

Swann, who has two children in the Kyrene School District, said he anticipates the possible unification of Kyrene, Tempe Elementary and Tempe Union High School districts will be a big topic.

"The people in Kyrene are very proud of the district and the performance it's had," Swann said. "I want (it) to be preserved as much as possible."

Both sides said they are excited about their candidates and optimistic about their chances of winning.

"We're getting ready to change the landscape in District 20," Ahwatukee Democrat Michael Williams, affirmative action chairman for the state Democratic Party said. "People don't want to rely on experience. They want some of these new ideas to work."

Mike Middleton, chairman of the Legislative District 20 Republicans, said he thinks the Republicans will "win pretty easily."

Staff reporter Edythe Jensen contributed to this report.

Post a Comment

This is a public comment zone. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their posts and must comply with our [Terms of Service](#) and [Rules of Engagement](#). Report offensive content by clicking on the "Report abuse" link.

azcentral.com login required

- [sign in to post a comment](#) »
- [click here to register for a free account](#) »

Your Comment:

You must be logged in to post comments.

[Log In](#) | [Register](#)